DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 381 754 CS 012 110

AUTHOR Folsom, Kathy
TITLE Developing and Implementing a Plan Involving Parents To Improve the Reading Interests of Middle School Students.
PUB DATE 94
NOTE 74p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova Southeastern University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Intermediate Grades; Junior High Schools; Middle Schools; *Parent Participation; Program Development; Program Implementation; *Reading Attitudes; *Reading Improvement; *Reading Interests; Reading Programs; Rural Schools
IDENTIFIERS Middle School Students; *Reading Motivation

ABSTRACT

A program was designed to improve the reading interests of students in a rural middle school. An analysis of the problem indicated that the students were not reading many library books. One of the probable causes for the lack of interest was related to the small amount of recreational reading done by students. A search of the literature revealed that involving parents in a reading program with their children was one of the best ways to improve reading achievement. Intervention included recruiting parents to enroll their children in a Reading Club. Parents who enrolled their children in the Reading Club agreed to read aloud to their children on a daily basis and to turn in simple reading logs to the teachers each month. As a reward for their parents' read aloud efforts, the children received a free book of their choice each month. The objectives were to improve the students' reading interests. Data used to evaluate the practicum intervention indicated that the reading interests improved. In addition, parents increased their involvement in the education of their children. (Contains 43 references and 10 tables of data. Appendixes present a reading log, enrollment form, and forms for teachers' notes and parents' participation.) (Author/RS)

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ED 381 754

Developing and Implementing a Plan Involving Parents to Improve the Reading Interests of Middle School Students

by

Kathy Folsom

Cluster 61

A Practicum I Proposal Presented to the Ed. D. Program
in Child and Youth Studies in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

1994

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

Verifier: _____

Dr. Marjorie Calhoun

Principal
Title

Twin Oaks Elementary School
Route 4, Box 385
Leesburg, Georgia 31763

_____
Date

This practicum report as submitted by Kathy Folsom under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

1-30-95
Date of Final Approval of Report

Georgianna Lowen
Georgianna Lowen, Ed.D.
Advisor

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to the many individuals who put in countless hours assisting me with the activities outlined in the practicum intervention. To begin with, my continuing thanks to the parents of the sixth grade students who volunteered their time and talents in working with students affected by the problems identified in this intervention. Special thanks to Pam Golden who worked faithfully with me to improve the reading experiences of my students.

I would like to thank the staff of the Media Center, the members of the Reading Club, the staff of the local public library, and the members of the P.T.O. for providing monetary support for the extra books needed by the students.

Last, but not least, I extend an extraordinary amount of appreciation to the other members of the school staff for working to implement the activities suggested within this practicum report to enrich the reading experiences of the students.

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ABSTRACT

Developing and Implementing a Plan Involving Parents to Improve the Reading Interests of Middle School Students. Folsom, Kathy M., 1994: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed. D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Reading/Middle School Students/Parenting

This report describes a program designed to improve the reading interests of students in a rural school. An analysis of the problem indicated that the students were not reading many library books. One of the probable causes for the lack of interest in reading was related to the amount of recreational reading done by students.

The search of the literature revealed that involving parents in a reading program with their children was one of the best ways to improve reading achievement. Intervention included recruiting parents to enroll their children in a Reading Club. Parents who enrolled them in the Reading Club agreed to read aloud to their children on a daily basis and to turn in simple reading logs to the teachers each month. As a reward for their parents' read aloud efforts, the children received a free book of their choice each month. The objectives were to improve the students' reading interests.

Data used to evaluate the practicum intervention indicated that the reading interests improved. In addition, this research project contributed to an increase in the involvement of parents in the education of their children. This report includes 43 references, a reading log, and a Reading Club Enrollment form.

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Permission Statement

As a student in the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies, I do give permission to Nova Southeastern University to distribute copies of this practicum report on request from interested individuals. It is my understanding that Nova Southeastern University will not charge for this dissemination except to cover the costs of microfiching, handling, and mailing of the materials.

February 17, 1995 — Kathy Folsom

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The county in which this practicum takes place is located in the southeastern part of a southern state. The county borders two adjoining counties which have a high tax base. According to a U. S. Census data, the population of the county has changed considerably (Table 1)

Table 1

Population Trends from the U. S. Census

	1993 Census	1993 Estimate	1998 Forecast
Population Trends			
City	1,452	1,547	1,679
County	16,250	17,081	18,159
State	5,463,106	6,591,959	7,156,801
Population by Race			
White	80.04%	81.04%	82.90%
Black	19.29%	18.31%	16.44%
Hispanic	0.69%	0.69%	0.72%
Other	0.19%	0.36%	0.36%
Population by Sex			
Male	50.82%	51.03%	51.50%
Female	49.18%	48.97%	48.50%
Households	5,199	5,547	5,944
Average Income	$34,220.82	$37,285.00	$42,395.00
Median Income	$30,974.00	$34,358.00	$38,881.00

The following statistics table (Table 2) gives added information which describes the county.

Table 2

County Statistics from the Chamber of Commerce

AREA:	Acres Square Miles	226,880 358
POPULATION:	County County Seat Unicorporate Per Square. Mile	16,250 1,452 13,994 45.39
CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE:	Total available for work: Total Employed: Work Out of County:	8,541 8,083 71.0%
TRANSPORTATION:	Roads paved:	56.6%
EDUCATION:	57% Teachers with Advance Degrees Teacher/Pupil Ratio: 21 to 1	
CRIME:	No murders in five years Ranked a low 10 out of 159 counties	
AGRICULTURE:	Chief Crops: Irrigated Farmland:	Peanuts Pecans Corn Soybeans Cotton Wheat 40,387 Acres
MUNICIPAL SERVICES:	Fire Protection Police Protection Garbage Zoning	

The educational setting for this practicum is a rural middle school. This middle school has a population of 1,007 students in grades 6-8 and 65 faculty and staff members. The faculty and staff consists of a principal, two assistant principals, a media specialist, a school counselor, a special education teacher, an office manager, a secretary, a media clerk, four classroom paraprofessionals, nine food service personnel, and six

custodians.

This middle school endeavors to prepare the students for the high school experience. In addition to the academics, students are required to select a minimum of eight "exploratory" courses during their three years at the middle school. These courses range from home economics to band to computer. These introductory courses allow a student to more effectively choose elective courses in high school which are more in line with the student's interest and abilities.

From a socio-economic standpoint, most of the students at this middle school come from families of farm-related backgrounds with a middle to lower range income. The ethnic balance of the students is almost equal. Fifty-three percent of the students are Black and forty-eight percent are Caucasian. Academically, the students at this school rank near the state and national average on standardized tests. Most recent figures show the students averaging 413 on the verbal portion of the test and 472 on the math portion, totalling an average of 885, some 40 points higher than the state average.

In addition, the number of dropouts from this county was reduced nearly two-thirds in one year due to Project Success, a program still in full swing today. Recently initiated in the school system is the Partners for Excellence program co-sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and the

Board of Education. Area businesses sponsor a school throughout the year in an effort to enhance programs at that school. Knowing they are contributing to the future of the county, these "partners" gladly contribute their time, talents, resources, finances and expertise to strive for excellence in the school system.

The county has one high school, one middle school, two elementary schools and one primary school. The total enrollment for the 1993-1994 school year was 3,131. The following table reflects the attendance for each of the schools in the county for the 1993-1994 school year.

Table 3. Student Enrollment for the County Schools 1993-1994

School	Students
High School	1200
Middle School	1007
Elementary School	312
Elementary School	300
Primary School	302

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer of this practicum has been in education for the past 20 years. The first 12 years were spent teaching the fifth grade in a private school. The remaining years have been spent as a sixth grade teacher in a public middle school. Present duties include, but are not limited to, teaching language arts, reading, and social studies. The writer of the

practicum is often asked to emphasize and evaluate the reading proficiency of the students by collecting data from class profiles, ITBS test scores, checklist, school records, and teacher observations.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Reading can be a very complex and often undefinable process. Many students do not reach their potential in reading because they need additional guidance from their parents and teachers. The problem that existed was that the twenty-five sixth grade students were not reading many books. Eight of the twenty-five sixth grade students had not read any books. Research emphasized the importance of parental involvement in the education of children. The reading experiences of these students did not involve the parents. The situation that needed improvement was to increase the number of books read by the students and to involve the parents in this reading experience.

Problem Documentation

The state's Quality Basic Education Act (QBE) required norm-referenced test to be administrated to students in the sixth grade. Results of these tests were used in planning instructional improvement activities and in various program evaluation efforts.

The 1991-1993 average percentile scores on the reading portion of the ITBS for the sixth grade students were given in the following table (Table 4) for the middle school, county, and state:

Table 4: Sixth Grade Reading Percentile Scores 1991-1993

DATE	GRADE	AVERAGE READING PERCENTILE SCORES		
		SCHOOL	COUNTY	STATE
1991	6	50	60	62
1992	6	42	57	63
1993	6	37	61	66

From 1991, the average reading percentile scores of these sixth graders decreased. This indicated that there was a need for reading improvement in this class, and a need to determine the causes of the decline in reading scores.

The ITBS test data were more conclusive when the number of students scoring below a certain percentile was determined and that number was reported as a percentage. The 50th and the 25th percentiles were chosen as markers to distinguish levels of achievement. Above the 50th percentile was considered acceptable reading achievement, and below the 25th percentile was considered very low reading achievement for sixth grade students. All students who scored below the 25th percentile in reading would also be reflected in the numbers of those students scoring below the 50th percentile. The following table (Table 5) showed the number of 6th grade students who scored below the 50th percentile and below the 25th percentile on the reading portion of the ITBS from 1991 to 1993.

Table 5: Sixth Grade Students Scoring Below the 50th and 25th Percentiles on the ITBS

YEAR	GRADE	50TH	25TH
1991	6	14	11
1992	6	17	8
1993	6	19	6

This sixth grade class had a higher number of students scoring below the 50th percentile on the reading portion of the ITBS. The number indicated that in this class there was a high number of lower achieving reading students.

The County School System participated in the free or reduced price lunch program. Table 6 showed the percentage of students on free or reduced price lunches:

Table 6: Student on the Free or Reduced Lunch Program

SCHOOL	% FREE	% REDUCED	% FREE & REDUCED
High School	5	15	20
Middle School	20	15	35
Elementary School	18	15	33
Elementary School	15	10	25
Primary School	12	10	22

The Middle school has the highest percentage of students on the free or reduced lunch program in the county school system. The percentage of students at the middle school receiving free lunches was much higher than the average percentage of students receiving free lunches at the other

schools in the county. This high percentage of students receiving free or or reduced lunch program in the county school system. The percentage of students at the middle school receiving free lunches was much higher than the average percentage of students receiving free lunches at the other schools in the county. This high percentage of students receiving free lunches at the middle school was an indicator of the low socioeconomic conditions of the families from which many of the children come. These low socioeconomic conditions of the children were reflected in their reading achievements. Children from low socioeconomic conditions did not perform as well on standardized reading achievement tests as children who came from high socioeconomic conditions. Nineteen of the twenty-five students in this 6th grade class were on the free lunch program.

During the 1993-1994 school year at the middle school, students in this sixth grade class kept library reading logs for six months. The following table (Table 7) showed the average number of library books read by this six grade class during this time according to their ITBS reading percentile scores:

Table 7. Books Read by Sixth Grade Students

ITBS PRT	NO OF STUDENTS	BOOKS READ
> 75TH	NA	NA
50TH	19	35
<25TH	8	0

The twenty-five sixth grade students participated in a recreational reading program during the 1993-1994 school year. Students scoring above the 50th percentile on the reading portion of the ITBS read an average of 35 library books. Those students who scored below the 25th percentile ran an average of 0 books.

This implied that students who scored higher in reading on the ITBS did more recreational reading than those students who scored lower in reading on the ITBS. The higher the ITBS reading score, the greater the average number of books read for pleasure. Students who could read, did a lot of reading. Those students who had weak reading skills did not read as much as the students who had better reading skills.

During the 1993-1994 school year, the teacher questioned the students individually to determine the number of books each child personally owned. The following table (Table 8) gave the number of books owned by the students:

Table 8: Books Owned by Students

GRADE	NO. STUDENTS	<5	5-10	>10
6	25	13	8	4

Students who owned the most books were those children who came from homes of higher socioeconomic status. These children usually made

better grades and scored higher on standardized tests than children who did not own books or who owned free books. These children, on the average, performed poorly in academic subjects. This indicated that students who did not have books of their own did not have as many opportunities to enrich their lives through books.

Causative Analysis

From 1991-1994, the average reading percentile scores on the ITBS for the sixth grade class at the middle school were below the county and state averages. During this time a high number of children in the county qualified for the free and reduced lunch program. The combination of these two factors indicated that many of the children at the middle school were disadvantaged.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Research indicated many shortcomings associated with norm-referenced tests. Maeroff (1991) stated that the speed and low cost of the norm-referenced test, with its multiple-choice responses, appealed to the world of education. Maeroff advocated alternative assessment for students. However, he recognized that students who score poorly on the norm-referenced tests with their multiple choice responses are not necessarily going to perform better on the alternatives.

The sixth grade class at the middle school was given the ITBS each March as mandated by the local Board of Education. The idea was to

analyze and interpret data to help children to become academically successful.

Amspaugh (1990) stated that some standardized tests contained test questions that were written in such a way that even the teachers were not sure which were the right answers. She stated that taking standardized tests took a lot of time. The time spent on taking the tests could best be spent with the children learning to read real books and enjoying practical applications of mathematics and writing.

Means and Knapp (1991) stated that children who score lower than their peers on standardized tests of reading tend to come from poor backgrounds. They reported that disadvantaged students receive less exposure to print outside of school and family support for education than do their more advantaged peers.

Frymier (1990) reported that children who are retained a grade were much more likely to drop out of school than children who were promoted, and their general achievement in the years ahead was lower than that of students who were promoted. Ten percent of the students retained at the middle school were retained for the second or third time. Smith and Shepard (1987) estimated the overall rate of retention in the United States as being 15% to 19%. The overall retention rate at the middle school was consistent with the national rates.

Teacher turnover affected the reading program at the school. The new teachers had to become acquainted with the basal reading program used at the school. Very little staff development was provided for new teachers on the basal reading program. The lack of continuous staff development in the basal reading series for new teachers suggested a probable cause of low reading achievement of sixth grade students. Teacher turnover continued at the middle school as additional teachers were added to the faculty to accommodate new students moving into the county.

Middle school teachers had the highest absenteeism of all the teachers in the school system. The number of days teachers were absent from class had a negative effect on instruction. Substitute teachers at the school had little education beyond high school. Everyday a teacher was out of the class, the students lost valuable instructional time. Absenteeism was a probable cause for the low reading achievement of the sixth grade students.

Teachers were allowed to accumulate up to 45 days of sick leave. In 1993, a new leave policy was introduced but was not approved by the Board of Education. In the new leave policy the teachers would have been able to accumulate an unlimited number of sick days. It is believed by some that this new leave policy would have a positive effect on reducing

teacher absenteeism. The new leave policy would be discussed by the Board of Education later on in the school year.

Another probable cause for the low reading achievement of the sixth grade students was the amount of worksheets the teacher gave to the students. The number of worksheets students received at the school was a problem not only in reading but in other areas of the curriculum. When students were completing worksheets, they were losing teacher instructional time. The sixth grade teacher averaged using approximately 5,400 photocopied sheets during the school year. Although not all of the photocopied sheets were necessarily student worksheets, the majority of them were. A child cannot learn to read by doing worksheets. One goal was to increase student recreational and academic reading time.

Smith (1992) expressed that children learn from the company they keep, and that there are two groups of people that ensure that children learn to read. The first group included the people who read to children: parents, friends, and teachers. The second group was composed of the authors of the books that children love to read. The authors helped children to recognize written words. Smith (1992) reported that four year-olds learn about 20 new words a day. When they enter school, they know around 10,000 words. When they leave school, they know at least 50,000 words, and more, depending on how much reading they do.

Smith advocated reading to children. He said that reading to children served many purposes. It put children in the company of people who read and it showed them what can be done with reading.

The effectiveness of teachers teaching reading in the classroom was hard to determine. The Teacher Evaluation Instrument had only been in existence since 1988, and evaluation forms prior to that time were nonexistent.

Most of the students in the sixth grade class came from lower socioeconomic conditions, and they made up the largest number of students who scored below the 50th and 25th percentiles on the reading portion of the ITBS. One of the probable causes for low reading achievement of second grade students was the low socioeconomic conditions of the families from which many of the lower achieving students came.

Attendance did not appear to be a probable cause of the low reading achievement of the sixth grade students. There were no outstanding number of days absent from this group of sixth grade students.

The students of this sixth grade class were placed in a basic reading class based on their reading performance as indicated on the ITBS test and on recommendations of the teachers and principal. Ability grouping in reading did not allow low reading achieving students to experience reading

modeling by their peers who were better readers.

One probable cause for low reading achievement by the sixth grade student was related to the number of books they read. Table 7 showed that students who did not read well did not read as many books as the students who were better readers. Students who performed poorly on reading tests tended to do little recreational reading compared to students who were better readers.

Another probable cause for low reading achievement was related to the number of books that the students personally owned. Students who owned books had greater opportunities to improve their reading skills than children who did not own any books. Families that provided books for their children were concerned enough about reading to have purchased books for their children.

There were many causes related to the low reading achievement of the sixth grade students. The most prevalent causes were related to the low socioeconomic status of many of the families from which most of the students came. Families of low socioeconomic status were unable to provide books for their children; therefore, these children did not have as many opportunities for improving their reading skills as did children who came from families who provided books for their children. Another probable cause was grouping within the classroom. Children from lower

socioeconomic backgrounds were often grouped together and did not have opportunities to associate with students who were better readers.

Cuban (1989) reported that parents of children from families and certain cultural backgrounds failed to prepare their children for school and provided little support for them in school. Parents of this sixth grade were not involved in the education of their children, and this could have been one of the causes of low reading achievement.

Several studies by Durkin (1966) indicated that children who learned to read early had parents who played the critical role in their children's early success in reading. Durkin also found that the home environment, as set by the parents, was conducive to learning to read. In these homes, parents acted as role models by reading to themselves and reading to their children. Parents shared a variety of interesting experiences with their children and talked with them about the experiences. These parents also helped their children by providing them with materials to explore writing and reading on their own.

Henderson (1988) reported that evidence clearly indicates that involving parents in student's education could lead to impressive gains in achievement. Henderson pointed out that there are three aspects of parental involvement. First, studies have demonstrated that providing a home environment that was conducive to learning had a strong effect on

student achievement. This included parents having high expectations for their children and helping to foster positive attitudes toward learning. Second, getting parents involved in the educational programs of the school also resulted in positive outcomes. Third, schools that maintained high levels of student achievement had high levels of parental and community support and involvement.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectation

The following goals and outcomes were projected for this practicum. In general the students involved in this practicum will read and enjoy books, and the parents will be involved in this experience.

Expected Outcomes

The objectives for the reading program for the 25 sixth grade students at the middle school are directed at the administration, the teacher of the 25 sixth grade students, the students and their parents. The objectives are as follows:

1. As a result of intervention over a period of twelve weeks all of the sixth grade students will have read two or more books per month as documented in their reading logs.
2. As a result of intervention over a period of twelve weeks twenty out of the twenty-five parents of the sixth grade students will be involved in their child's reading experience by becoming members of the class Reading Club. The Reading Club membership will include the students, parents, and teacher. A daily log will be kept by parents and teacher of their reading activities with their children. The log will be turned in each month to the principal.
3. As a result of intervention over a period of twelve weeks sixteen out

of the twenty-five students will be rewarded free books by the principal for their reading efforts.

Measurement of Outcome

This practicum is designed to increase the reading experiences of the twenty-five sixth grade students and to involve the parents in their child's reading experience.

The following is the first of three objectives that are used in the practicum:

1. As a result of intervention over a period of twelve weeks all of the sixth grade students will have read two or more books per month as documented in their reading logs.

The student reading logs are records that the students keep that document the reading activities they are involved with and the things they are learning. The reading logs allow the students to become actively involved in the evaluative process. As active participants in the monitoring process, the students become aware that learning is a lifelong activity that is not dependent upon another person such as the teacher. The log books provide a valuable format for teacher and student interaction. The reading logs will be signed by the parents and turned in to the teacher each month. The teacher will keep a total of the number of books read by each child. The student can record the date, book title

and author, and any comments about the book areas later. A sample of the reading log is found in Appendix A.

The second objective of the practicum is as follows:

2. As a result of intervention over a period of twelve weeks twenty out of the twenty-five parents of the sixth grade students will be involved in their child's reading experience by becoming members of the class Reading Club. The Reading Club membership will include the students, parents, and teacher. A daily log will be kepf by parents and teacher of their reading activities with their children. The log will be turned in each month to the teacher.

Each parent will be asked to fill out an enrollment form. A sample form is found in Appendix B. The teacher will document the names and the number of parents who participate in the Reading Club. The parents who agree to become members of the Reading Club will read with or to their child for 10 to 15 minutes daily as often as they can. The parents will be given information on the benefits of reading with their children and on reading techniques.

The third objective of the practicum is as follows:

3. As a result of intervention over a period of twelve weeks sixteen out of the twenty-five students will be rewarded free books by the principal for their reading efforts.

The students that read more than two books a month will visit the principal's office and receive a free book from over 100 different titles. The student's name will be entered on a chart outside of the principal's office. This chart will document the number students that receive free books from the principal. In addition to the students, the other teachers at the school will be exposed to many books and authors.

The fourth objective of the practicum is as follows:

4. As a result of intervention over a period of twelve weeks the teacher will note an improvement in student participation in the Reading Club. A daily log will be kept by the teacher of the reading activities of the students. The teacher's reading log will document the names of the students reading the books, the title of the books, and the authors.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGIES

Learning to read can be a very complex and often undefinable process in which a child develops into an emerging reader. Many students do not reach their potential in reading, because they need additional guidance from their parents which they are not receiving.

Parental involvement can encompass many different aspects in the area of reading achievement. The initial involvement is during the preschool years. During this time, the total home environment influences emerging literacy. Parents are laying the foundation on which reading will grow and flourish. Later, during the early elementary years, parents continue to build upon this foundation, now working in conjunction with a teacher and a school system. The parents, at this point in time, not only reinforce what they have established in the home, but they may also become involved in the school setting as well. This literacy process which began as a very simple, one unit in the home, becomes a broader network as more individuals have an impact on the child's reading.

Parents can make a tremendous difference in their child's success in school. The existing research indicated that given proper guidance and support, parents can supplement, in powerful fashion, learning that takes place in the school. Further, it is evidenced that the potential for

parents to help their children in learning to read is tremendous Rasinski & Fredericks (1991).

The twenty-five sixth grade students who attended this middle school had not been reading many books. The parents of these students were not involved in their child's reading experiences.

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

The review of the literature revealed several categories that were relevant to improving the reading program. The categories revolved around what the principal, teachers, and parents could do to improve reading.

Cliatt and Shaw (1988) reported that children who were read to became better listeners. Children could develop better listening skills by listening to stories. As the children thought about the stories they heard, they learned about logical thinking, cause-and effect relationships and sequencing. The stories expanded the children's experiences and helped them to develop imagining skills. Through stories children began to understand the feelings of others. Storytelling helped children develop their receptive and expressive language skills. The authors promoted the use of props to enhance storytelling. Using props, gave teachers an added interest and variety to the stories. Props could be an overhead projector, or the props could be more elaborate, such as

costumes.

Morrow (1985) stated in his article that retelling stories was an activity that aided in comprehension. Active involvement in the different forms of storytelling facilitated language growth.

Karweit (1989) stated that story reading in the classroom had been shown to increase the student's vocabulary and comprehension skills. She pointed out that teachers often simply read a story and then assigned a follow-up activity, with little opportunity for students to actively participate in the story or to reconstruct it.

Nessel (1985) promoted storytelling in the reading program. She stated that storytelling invited listeners to imagine, and to create a mental picture of the story.

A research study by Klug (1986) focused on the approach of using literature in the classroom to promote the development of creativity. He gave steps for the teacher to use in reading stories to children, the first of which was to prepare the listeners for this listening experience. The second step was the actual reading, telling, or dramatizing a story.

A study by Peterman (1988) showed that many teachers may be aware of the benefits to be derived from reading stories to children, but they did not know how to present the stories to the children. She suggested that staff development be implemented so that teachers could

be trained to plan and implement effective presentations.

An article by Miller and Gildea (1987) discussed how children learn words. According to the authors, the average child learned at the rate of 5000 words per year, or about 13 per day. Children with large vocabularies picked up new words at twice that rate. In school, children were taught about 100 to 200 words per year. Miller and Gildea maintained that many of the words learned were acquired through reading, and that the best way to facilitate vocabulary growth was to have children read as much as possible. Pinnell (1990) reported that success for low achievers in reading could be accomplished by providing one-to-one tutoring in addition to classroom instruction. This tutoring program included procedures for teaching children, recommended materials, and a staff development program. The goal for this system was to help children learn to use what they knew to get to what they did not know.

Carbo (1987) stated in a paper about phonics that phonics did not always work. She reported that phonics did not work for all students, and that phonics should be taught early, and it should be completed by the end of the second grade. Carbo revealed that no single reading method was appropriate for every child. Poor readers needed to be taught using high interest reading materials, instead of relying primarily

on the visual and auditory methods.

The review of the literature promoted high-interest reading materials as necessary to a good reading program. The use of reading material other than the basal readers could provide high-interest. Several authors reported that the use of high-interest reading material had positive effects.

Breaking away from the basal readers was advocated by Bingham and Allen (1986). These authors encouraged teachers to make their own decisions about when to use, or not to use, basal readers. They said that basal readers were popular because they were easy to manage. Basal reading series came under attack by several authors. Most authors agreed that the basal reading series would continue to be the dominant means by which reading is taught, but teachers must become aware of the limitations of the basal readers.

An article by Caldenhead (1987) gave examples of teachers breaking away from the basal reader. One teacher decided to use the reader program only four days a week. On the fifth day, the children were grouped according to types of literature. Books were selected of different types that were appropriate for children with a range of reading abilities. The children read several books on their own. They were led through different kinds of literature, and at the same time, the

requirements of teaching the basal were met.

One teacher grouped children around four themes in children's literature. Books varying in difficulty were selected on each theme. Children read the books, had individual conferences with the teacher, and participated in discussion groups in which questions calling for analysis and synthesis were stressed. After a few weeks, some children read from all themes. Cadenhead (1987) stated that teachers must be freed from basal programs and be encouraged to make decisions. He advocated that teachers should encourage children to read materials of varying difficulty.

A research study by Fry and Sakiey (1986) found that basal readers did not always teach the most common words. Their criterion was 3000 of the most common English works, and they surveyed five major American basal series. They found that the highest percentage of these common words taught by any of the basals was 59%.

A study by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) gave characteristics of highly effective school reading programs. They developed a model that described how high expectations for student achievement were translated into school policies and practices. Some of their finding showed a number of common school practices that supported reading instruction. They found a high level of coordination between classrooms,

not only at particular grade levels, but across grades. The schools had written policies regarding the amount of time spent on instruction each day. Teachers integrated related reading activities into instruction in other subjects, such as writing, science and social studies. Teachers did not limit the reading instruction to the basal series. The authors also reported that students frequently had free time to read, and all classrooms had a wide variety of books at various levels of difficulty and were easily accessible. One school reading program included spending the first 15 minutes after lunch reading silently. Students kept logs of the books they read, and they earned small rewards and public recognition for reaching milestones in numbers of books and pages read.

Finn and McKinney (1986) advocated reading aloud by both teacher and child. Teachers who read good stories whetted the appetites of their students for reading, and good teachers gave their students lots of opportunities to read aloud. The authors also supported independent reading. They stated that independent reading contributes significantly to reading achievement gains. One other important area that the authors covered was workbook activities. They stated that most students spent up to 70 percent of their reading time on workbook activities, but there was little evidence that such activities improved reading skills. A suggestion was made to cut the amount of time spent

on workbook activities and concentrate on reading.

Finn and McKinney gave several examples of how principals could improve reading. One principal visited each class and read aloud to the students. The principal asked the teachers to read aloud every day to the students, and the principal wrote a letter to parents encouraging them to read aloud to their children. Another suggestion that was made was to establish a reading climate in the school by stressing the importance of reading. One suggestion was to invite persons in the community to talk about their occupations, such as a detective who might get the children interested in reading suspense novels. Another way for principals to encourage reading was for children to make a paper caterpillar grow from their classroom to the principal's office. The caterpillar starts out with just a head. Each time a studeni read a book, a segment was added to its body. When the caterpillar reached the principal's office, the children received rewards.

Marinez, Vernon, Allen and Teale (1991) reported on what principals could do to promote voluntary reading. They said that to become proficient readers, children must practice reading. Children spent approximately one hour a day on reading practice, but most of that time was devoted to completing worksheets and workbook pages. Children should spend the majority of their seatwork time reading.

The authors gave the principal the responsibility for promoting voluntary reading. The principal informs the teachers about the value of voluntary reading to children's growth as readers. The children need access to books in the classroom. The principal and the media specialist established procedures for teachers to check out sets of books for their classrooms. Teachers should be encouraged by the principal to use public libraries to check out sets of books for their classrooms, too. These authors also stated that the principal should encourage teachers in all grades to read aloud to their students. By reading aloud, the teacher serves as a positive role model for reading. Other suggestions from the authors included the principal promoting voluntary reading by sending congratulatory notes to parents, noting individual reading accomplishments. The principal could also arrange for a period of free reading time to be set aside each day. The principal could take the lead in initiating parent/child reading partnerships, in which parents agreed to read aloud to their children for 15 minutes a day, at least five days a week. The principal could also invite members of the community into the classrooms to read to or with the children for 30 minutes. Having an adult read aloud would be a treat for the children.

The search of the literature revealed many articles concerning giving incentives to children to help promote reading. The use of

incentives seems to be a common practice in many schools.

Several samples of reading incentive programs were given by McGinnis, Moore, Morgan, and McGrath (1986). One incentive reading program involved local restaurants which were provided with laminated table tents listing reasons for parents to read aloud to their children. One school developed a Century Reading Club for students who became members when they read over a hundred books. Members of this club scored an average of one year higher on reading achievement tests than nonmembers. Another school had a corporation donate a book to the school library when a child read 10 books and discussed them with an adult volunteer. The donated book had a bookplate naming the child as the donor.

McGarth (1987) reported a reading incentive program in which the students who read and reported on a book received a certificate redeemable at a local ice cream store. When the student completed 12 books, a new book was placed in the school library with a bookplate announcing it as a gift of that reader.

A reading incentive program was developed by Distad (1987) in which a reading lab was opened 20 minutes before the morning bell. A series of incentives were developed to maintain student interest. After 15 visits to the lab, students received a bookmark. Another 35 visits

earned them a button; 50 more entitled them to a book; and readers who continued in the program were rewarded with a surprise party. Another component to the reading lab was to stamp the students' hands, so that they could show classmates and teachers that they had visited the lab.

In the literature search, many articles and studies were found involving parents in the education of their children. One of the methods of improving reading that was repeated in the literature was reading aloud to children by their parents.

Smith (1988) stated that parents cannot avoid being the center of the early education of their children. They created the early images about learning that will shape the child's attitude for many years into the future. If a young child sees a parent reading regularly then reading to learn becomes important to the child because the most important person in the world reads (Miller, 1986). That image is imprinted in the child's brain. Often parents do not understand how important they are to their child's education.

One attempt to organize the various dimension of parental involvement comes from Petit (1980). Petit specifies three levels of increasing parental involvement: monitoring, informing, and participation. Monitoring refers to being aware of the school situation. At this level Potter (1989) described such activities as informal chats, personal

letters, and questionnaires between the teacher and parents. Informing, according to Potter, means apprising parents about the policies, procedures, aims, and expectations that exist in the school and classroom. The communication becomes more formal at this level. Potter discussed such communication devices as parent-teacher conferences, newsletters, and calendars. Potter described one program in which parents are trained in the procedures of a school reading program and another program in which others act as helpers in the classroom.

An article by Rasinski and Fredericks (1991) reported on a reading project pairing parents with children. Paired reading allowed parents to provide structured practice in contextual reading for their children. In paired reading, parents read along with their children in a book of their child's choosing. The authors stated that children engaged in a paired reading program for only 5 to 15 minutes a day made significant gains in fluency and comprehension. In this paired reading project, teachers made home visits to train parents who could not attend the training sessions held in the school. After the training, the parents and their children then signed contracts in which they agreed to engage in paired reading. The parents and children read one book chosen by the child each week. The children were allowed to choose books from their

schools and libraries that appealed to them and were consistent with their reading levels.

In evaluating the paired reading program, teachers found parents overwhelmingly positive. Many of the parents said that paired reading helped to improve the child's desire to read and strengthened the bond of affection between parents and children.

Parent Participation in the school was promoted by Comer (1986). Comer said programs that involved parents in the schools played major roles in creating a desirable context for teaching and learning. He pointed out that there were obstructions in the way of parent participation in the schools. Many schools simply did not want parents present, and many parents were reluctant to become involved. One of Comer's findings was that parent participation in a well-managed program could help eliminate harmful stereotypes that staff members may harbor about the community served by the school. Many parents who participated in school programs become energized and returned to school to finish their own education.

Rich (1985) said that parents could be helped in order to help their children learn. She promoted a home involvement program, but she said it could not work without support from teachers and administrators. According to Rich, one way the school could help was to send home

learning activities for the parents and children to do together. Another way was to distribute home learning activities at workplaces, churches, gas stations, and grocery stores. She said that parent involvement must be viewed as a legitimate activity of the school, and reaching the family must be considered as important as reaching the child.

Parent practices were authored by Becher (1985). She said that the most frequently recommended parental practice is reading to the child. Reading to the child related positive attitudes towards reading and reading achievement. Parents were more likely to value reading to their child if teachers pointed out the specific benefits to be gained from this activity. Reading to the child has been shown to significantly increase children's listening and speaking vocabularies, letter and symbol recognition abilities, length of spoken sentences, literal and inferential comprehension sills, number and nature of concepts developed, interests in books and reading, and view of reading as a valued activity. Becher indicated that children whose parents read to them on a regular basis, for at least four times a week and daily, for eight to ten minutes at a time, exhibited more positive attitudes and higher achievement levels in reading than did children whose parents did not read to them. Becher also stated that parents who initiated talks with their children about the books they were reading had children with significantly higher reading

achievement scores and more highly developed and expanded concepts than children whose parents did not. Another of Becher's findings was that children with more positive attitudes and higher achievement levels in reading came from homes in which there was a wide range of reading materials available.

Becher implied that in order for parents to be effectively involved in promoting reading to their children, teachers needed to be specific in their requests and recommendations. They needed to discuss the amount of time that should be invested, and they needed to take particular care in explaining that this process should be a cognitive or thinking activity for the child rather than a listening activity. Teachers need to develop specific examples of questions to ask and points to discuss for some of the children's favorite books and give them to parents. Teachers should also provide information to parents about high interest, worthwhile reading material. They could provide a list of resource materials on children's books which parents could use as a reference and guide in assisting their children in selecting books. Teachers could assist parents in developing effective reading instruction techniques, including appropriate ways of listening to their child read.

In a study by Clary (1989) evidence supports the fact that parents should become involved in their children's efforts to learn to read. She

said that parents must set examples, and that they must follow up on reading and become part of the instructional program in their child's school. She promoted parents reading to their children. Clary gave suggestions for teaching children to read by doing things with books. They could be fun activities, such as having a neighborhood book characters' parade or writing family plays about books. Clary suggested that parents could help youngsters write and bind their own books. She stated that parents should take the responsibility to find out and participate in the instructional program in their child's school.

A research study by Haney (1988) reviewed the research on the value of reading aloud to others. Haney said that reading aloud produced positive growth in the attitudes of children toward reading. There was evidence of the direct relationship between reading aloud to children and their reading performance, language development and the development of reading interests. He found that reading aloud was more effective with children in the lower socioeconomic status, and that the children at the lowest extremes of reading achievement showed the most growth in reading scores. She stated that regardless of the child's socioeconomic status, the children that were read to in the home had higher achievement scores in all aspects of reading.

Radicki (1987) reported that studies over the past 30 years had

consistently shown that adults reading aloud to children positively affected or correlated highly with children's reading ability.

A research study by Rustin (1989) was designed to increase the amount of time parents read to their children. Parents selected for the study participated in a series of teacher-presented workshops to discover the value of reading aloud, learning strategies for presenting literature, and practicing reading aloud to their children. The results of the study indicated that presenting workshops for parents would help them increase the amount of time they read aloud to their children. The presentation of the workshops enhanced parent's knowledge of reading aloud. This promoted the increase in the amount of time that parents read to their children.

Daly (1987) developed a guide which provided suggestions and activities that parents could follow at home to help their children read. The author stated that regularly reading aloud to and with children was an important way for parents to help improve children's reading, writing and thinking skills, and at the same time, enhance the parent-child bond.

In a study by Miller (1986), research indicated that parent involvement in reading can increase the children's achievement. Parent attitude surveys revealed that most parents want to be involved in their children's education. Reading to children and listening to them were

found to be the most significant ways parents could increase their children's achievement.

A descriptive study by Watt (1989) examined whether reading aloud to children regularly would have an effect on their future disposition to reading. A questionnaire was sent home with 487 kindergarten through fifth grade students. The results of the study showed that a strong background of being read aloud to had several positive effects. Among them were stronger and more positive attitudes toward books, a larger scope of reading materials, and the introduction of more involved reading material at earlier ages than their peers.

Roser (1989) gave specific suggestions to help parents encourage their children to become readers. She stated that parents should read to children regularly, and they should continue to read to them once they learn to read. She suggested that parents should make sure that children had their own books.

A study by Sullivan (1988) examined whether reading aloud to children on a regular basis had an effect on their attention span. Results indicated that the read aloud treatment to children five time per week had a positive effect on their test scores relating to auditory memory and attention span. The results also showed that reading habits in the home affected the child in positive ways

Pater (1985) stated that many children were spending a full day in child care centers while working parents were contending with time pressures and limited opportunities to interact with their children. The author suggested that child care centers implement a reading program that provided a variety of books for children to read.

Trelease (1991) gave several suggestions about ways to get parents involved in a read program at school. He said that if parents understood the benefits their children would receive from being read aloud to, there would not be much of a problem getting them involved. He said once the reading improvement program started, other parents would hear about it, and the number of parents reading to their children should increase. He suggested that parents should provide a reading lamp at the bedside of their children. He said that most children will read if they can stay up longer, and that parents should tell their children that they can stay up 30 minutes longer if they read a book.

Another possible solution to improving the reading program is motivation. Motivation plays an important role in reading success. In order for students to become self-confident and motivated, they have to fell they will not fail miserably and be worse off than when they started, Topping (1987). Topping's research shows that passive failure and learned helplessness has revealed that repeated failure often leads to

passivity, reduced confidence, and poor motivation to learn. Some of the techniques educators have used to help motivate students to read are: ability grouping for instruction, flexibility grouping, grouping by interest, teaching toward morality strengths, adjusting the school calendar to year-round instruction, refining reading materials, and making learning fun.

Description of Selected Solution

This reading project was designed to increase the reading interest of the students and to involve parents in their child's reading experience. This concept can be applied to any grade and to any reading level. Engaging the parents in reading aloud to their children at home is very important. The teacher contacted the parents of their students by letter, in person, or by phone to join the class Reading Club. Parents were encouraged to come to the school for a conference during which the teacher explained the Reading Club program. Parents were invited to check out books from the school library to read at home to their children. During the conferences with the teacher the parents were given tips on techniques for reading aloud at home. Parents were encouraged to read to or with their child for 10 to 15 minutes at least five times a week and keep a simple reading log of their read aloud activities. The reading logs were turned in to the homeroom teacher at the beginning of each month.

As a reward for their reading efforts at home, the students who read three or more books each month would go to the principal's office and receive a free book of their choice from the principal. This project provided books for children who may not have ordinarily received them.

In this reading project sustained silent reading occurred throughout the school. A study by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) supported giving students time for sustained silent reading. Students need time to read for pleasure each day for approximately 15 minutes.

The media specialist opened the library each morning before school opened to allow students additional time to select books and to use the library facilities.

The adults from the community were encouraged to visit the school and to read aloud to small groups of students. These adult volunteers compensated for the inactivity of parents who do not read to their children.

Report of Action Taken

The implementation phase began with a meeting with the principal to discuss the Reading Club and to receive permission to have a 15 minute period of sustained silent reading daily in the classroom. After receiving permission from the principal, a letter was sent to the parents explaining the Reading Club with an enrollment form for the parents to

sign. The Reading Club was also explained to the students and was shared with other members of the faculty at the monthly faculty meeting.

Those students who enrolled in the Reading Club were then taken to the school library to read and check out books. The teacher later contacted those parents who had not enrolled in the Reading Club, encouraging them to become members. During the School's first PTA meeting the teacher talked to the parents about the Reading Club, and handouts were given to the parents about reading. Parents at this time were able to view samples of the books used in the program.

At the end of the first month of the implementation of the Reading Club, those students who read three or more books received a free book from the principal over the closed circuit TV. The closed circuit TV presentation was used because more students and teachers would be given the chance to view the presentation and become more aware of the Reading Club.

During the second month of implementation a storyteller came to the classroom and told the children stories. The principal visited the classroom often and encouraged the students to continue to read. At this time the students participated in a story theater. The students wrote their own lines for "An American Thanksgiving," a play about pilgrims and Indians. The play was presented before the student body.

Additional reading log forms were given to the students to take home the third month of implementation. Conferences were held between the teacher and parents to discuss the reading progress of the participating students. Plans were made to continue the Reading Club program for the remainder of the school year.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND DISSEMINATIONS

The problem that existed was that the 25 sixth grade students were not reading many books. Eight of the 25 sixth grade students had not read any books. Research emphasized the importance of parental involvement in the education of children. The situation that needed improvement was to increase the number of books read by the students and to involve the parents in this reading experience.

Results of Implementation

This research project was designed to improve the reading interests of the 25 sixth grade students at the middle school. Evaluation data presented on the following pages indicated that the reading interests improved during the intervention of this project. In addition, this research project contributed to an increase in the involvement of parents in the education of their children.

The evaluation process included analyzing the students and parents reading logs, and counting the number of free books given to the student by the principal for their reading efforts.

The following was the first of three objectives that were used in the research project.

1 As a result of intervention over a period of twelve weeks all of

the sixth grade students will have read two or more books per month as documented in their reading logs.

Analysis of the students reading logs indicated that each student read two or more books per month during the three month implementation period. The following table (Table 9) gives the results of the students' reading logs.

Table 9

Number of Books Read by the 25 Sixth Grade Students

First Month	Second Month	Third Month
75	83	87

The results show an increase in the number of books read each month by the 25 sixth grade students. The students were encouraged to share books with each other. This enabled all students to have access to as many books as possible.

The second objective of the project was as follows:

2. As a result of intervention over a period of twelve weeks twenty out of the twenty-five parents of the sixth grade students will be involved in their child's reading experience by becoming members of the class Reading Club. The Reading Club membership will include the students, parents, and teacher. A daily log will be kept by parents and teacher of their reading

activities with their children. The log will be turned in each month to the principal.

Analysis of the parents' reading log indicated that in the first month the parents of this sixth grade class were reluctant to join the Reading Club. However, as time went on the parents became more interested in the Reading Club as indicated by the following table (Table 10).

Table 10

Parent Participation in the Reading Club

First Month	Second Month	Third Month
15	18	21

The third objective for the project was as follows:

3. As a result of intervention over a period of twelve weeks sixteen out of the twenty-five students will be rewarded free books by the principal for their reading efforts.

The students that read more than two books a month visited the principal's office and received a free book from over 200 different titles. The student's name was then entered on a chart outside of the principal's office. The chart was used to document the number of students who received free books from the principal. An analysis of the chart outside of the principal's office indicated that 18 of the twenty-five sixth grade students receive a free book from the principal.

Discussion

This project was designed to involve parents in the education of their children by having parents participate in a Reading Club by reading with them or reading aloud to the children. The parents were contacted by the sixth grade teacher by letter, by phone, or in person. The parents were encouraged to come to the school for conferences during which the teacher explained the reading project. The parents were also invited to check out books from the school library to read at home with their children. The parents were encouraged to read aloud to or with their children daily for 10 to 15 minutes at least five times a week and keep a reading log of their reading activities. On a monthly basis the participation of parents increased. This increase was probably due to the parent and students being familiar with the program.

This project was centered upon reading to and with children. The teacher read with the children at school, while the parents read with or to them at home. The search of literature contained many articles on the benefits of reading to children, but no studies were found that produced the same positive results. As parents heard about this project from other parents who were involved in the program, the number of parents involved in the program increased. The children of the parents not

involved also contributed to an increase in parental involvement. Children in the class told other classmates about their reading logs and receiving free storybooks. The parents of the class responded to the challenge of the teacher and they became involved in their child's education by reading with them at home. Authors, such as: Clary (1989); Becher (1985); Rasinski and Fredericks (1991); Haney (1988); Radecki (1987); Rustin (1989); Daly (1987); and Miller (1986) reported the positive effects of parents' reading to children.

One of the most prevalent probable causes of the low reading interests in this class involved the low socioeconomic status of many of the families from which the children came. The parents of these children were reluctant to become involved in their child's education. These parents provided fewer books in the home for their children. The reading project provided storybooks to be put in the hands of children who may not have ordinarily received them.

This reading project produced some side effects not anticipated. One of these was the relationship between the principal and the students. Before and during the project, many children associated the principal's office with discipline only. As the project evolved, the attitudes of the children appeared to change. Their association with the principal's office and discipline was changed to a more pleasant association.

Another positive side effect of the project was the attitude of the parents who were involved in the program. They expressed their enjoyment in reading to their children, and they enjoyed having their children read to them. Another side effect of the project was the interest that it created within the school. Other teachers wanted to know about the project and its accomplishments. In addition to the students, the teachers were exposed to many books and authors as they visited the principal's office and noticed the chart outside the principal's door.

Recommendations

The solution to the problem of low reading interests among students will continue to be a challenging one for teachers and school administrators. The following are two recommendations that could benefit others:

1. This research project should be funded before implementation. The funds would be used for the purchase of storybooks to give to children.
2. The sixth grade students indicated that they preferred reading on their own rather than having an adult read to or with them. This was verified by the sixth grade teacher who stated that sixth grade students were becoming more confident in their reading.

Dissemination

The results of this practicum intervention were disseminated in several ways. A review of practicum results was shared with members of the local school faculty. The writer intends to share this report with Parent/Teacher Association at the local school site, and the area Superintendent who supported the writer in the implementation of this practicum. Finally, the writer would like to submit a copy of this practicum report to the local school library for future use by other educators interested in increasing the reading activities of their students.

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APPENDIX A

READING CLUB

READING LOG

READING CLUB READING LOG

Student _____ Grade _____ Teacher _____

Parent's Signature _____ Month _____

We encourage you to read with your child as often as you can. Reading provides quality time between parents and children. Record what you read and date it. Use the back if necessary. Sign the log and return it to your child's teacher at the beginning of each month. Thanks for reading with your child.

Date	Books Read

APPENDIX B

READING CLUB

ENROLLMENT FORM

READING CLUB

ENROLLMENT FORM

The Reading Club is an innovative program at the middle school that is designed to promote academic and recreational reading through involving parents in reading aloud to their children. Educational research has shown that one of the best methods of increasing a child's ability to read is to involve parents in the reading experience. It is the aim of the school to involve parents, teachers and students in this Reading Club. With this two-fold approach we hope to foster a love of reading in children at an early age and give them an academic boost to help them reach their maximum educational potential.

Parents who enroll their children in the Reading Club are encouraged to read to or with their child daily for 10 to 15 minutes at least five times a week throughout a period of twelve weeks. The parent will also turn in a simple reading log of their reading activities to the homeroom teacher at the beginning of each month. If the child reads two or more books per month, the principal will reward the child with a free book of his/her choice.

I would like to enroll _____ in the Reading Club. I will agree to read to or with my child daily for 10 to 15 minutes as often as possible and keep a log of my reading activities that I will be turned in to the homeroom teacher at the beginning of each month.

_____ _____

Parent Teacher

_____ _____

Date Grade

APPENDIX C

READING CLUB

TEACHER'S NOTES

READING CLUB
TEACHER'S NOTES

Date	Student's Name	Book Title	Author

APPENDIX D

READING CLUB

PARENTS' PARTICIPATING

READING CLUB
PARENTS' PARTICIPATING

Name of Parents	Student's Name

Total Number of parents participating in the reading club _____.